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PERRY E. THURSTON, JR

Florida House of Representatives
District 93

October 29, 2009

The Honorable Larry Cretul, Speaker
Florida House of Representatives
402 South Monroe Street
420 The Capitol
Tallahassee, FL 32399-1300

Dear Speaker Cretul:

The people of Florida represent a rich diversity of cultures, backgrounds and experiences. The diversity of our state is, in fact, one of our greatest treasures. Therefore, it is imperative that we do our best to ensure a complete and accurate count of everyone who resides in Florida during the 2010 U.S. Census.

As you know, the Census takes place every 10 years and it is used for a variety of purposes. The original purpose of the census was for determining the appropriate number of seats the state should have in the U.S. House of Representatives. Today, the count impacts much more, including the amount of federal funding received by the states, counties and cities.

In fact, many matters of civic importance are determined by the census. The planning of Florida's schools, highways, roads and other vital public services is largely based on data derived from the census. And, of course, we also will rely on the census data for reapportionment and redistricting, particularly in the redesign of congressional and legislative district boundaries.

I am proud to serve as a delegate to the Florida's Complete Count Committee. As such, I recognize the critical importance of an accurate Census count. I write today, however, to share my disappointment regarding a matter I was reminded of during an Oct. 21 briefing of the Florida House Select Policy Council on Strategic & Economic Planning.


During the meeting, we discussed how the Florida Legislature has appropriated less than \$3 million toward the 2010 Sunshine Census Initiative that will focus on reaching the hard-to-count populations of our state. Florida's hard-to-reach populations often include children, migrant workers, university students, and sometimes people of African, Caribbean, Hispanic, Asian and Native American backgrounds. It is crucial that these individuals be counted.

If Florida intends to be a model for the nation in preparing for and conducting the 2010 U.S. Census, it is imperative that our state dedicate considerably more resources in its effort to reach our hard-to-count populations. In fact, it seems appropriate to me that an allocation of \$10 million would be justifiable for the census initiative.

Additional spending to obtain an accurate count of our population is money well spent. Every additional person accurately identified in the U.S. Census as a resident of our state is important to ensuring that Florida gets its fair share of national resources. Every year, about \$300 billion in federal funds are distributed to local, state and tribal governments based on census data. An accurate count of every person during the 2010 Census could result in more appropriate funding for our state's priorities.

I urge you to bring this important matter of the U.S. Census to the attention of the appropriations committees of the Florida House of Representatives. And should there be a special session of the Legislature prior to the 2010 regular session, I hope that you will join me in seeking support for a more appropriate level of funding to meet the goals of Florida's Complete Count Committee.

Sincerely,



Perry E. Thurston, Jr.
Representative, Florida House District 93

cc: House Democratic Leader Franklin Sands;

Representative Dean Cannon, Chair, Select Policy Council on Strategic & Economic Planning;

All members of the Florida House Select Policy Council on Strategic & Economic Planning.